

Flash Marriage To My Best Friend's Father

Chapter 281:

“I don’t care,” Eliza said. The trembling stopped. Her eyes hardened. “I don’t care about Weston. I don’t care about Zane. He is my husband. Unless he looks me in the eye and tells me to leave, I am not going anywhere.”

Vance studied her – the wet hair, the ruined shoes, the fierce set of her jaw. He seemed to be calculating something.

“You’re stubborn,” he murmured. “Dallas always liked that about you. It’s also what’s going to get you killed.” He checked his watch. “You want to see him?”

“Yes,” Eliza said instantly.

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“Prove it,” Vance said. “Meet me tonight. Ten o’clock. The 24-hour diner across the street – The Nightingale. Back booth.”

Eliza blinked. “A diner? Why?”

“Because I’m off duty at ten, and I need coffee that doesn’t taste like it was brewed yesterday,” Vance said. “And because I don’t discuss business in hospital lobbies where everyone is listening.”

“I’m not going anywhere,” Eliza said. “I’ll wait here.”

“Then you’ll wait forever,” Vance said, turning on his heel. “Security has orders to remove you if you loiter more than five minutes. Your choice, Mrs. Koch. The diner, or the sidewalk.”

He stepped back into the elevator.

“Wait!” Eliza called out. “I’ll be there!”

Vance didn’t smile. He simply flicked a business card through the air. It fluttered and landed on the floor.

“Don’t be late,” he said as the doors closed. “I hate waiting.”

Eliza stood alone in the middle of the lobby. The security guards crossed their arms and watched her.

She bent down and picked up the card. Black with gold lettering: Dr. Adrian Vance. Chief of Trauma Surgery.

She looked up at the ceiling, imagining the floor far above. Dallas was there. Broken. Because of a lie.

She crossed to a plastic chair and sat down, her legs unsteady beneath her. A gurney rolled past, the patient on it groaning softly. The sound made her chest ache.

Her phone buzzed. Bella.

“Eliza, where are you?” Bella’s voice was worried. “You missed the morning meeting. Mr. Sterling is asking questions.”

Eliza wiped a tear from her cheek and looked at her reflection in the dark phone screen. She looked wrecked.

“Bella,” she said, her voice finding its steadiness. “I need a favor. I need a change of clothes. Something simple, but professional. Something that says I’m not afraid of the devil.”

“What?” Bella sounded bewildered. “A change of clothes? Now?”

“I’m going to meet a man who holds the keys to my husband,” Eliza said. “And I need to look like I belong in his world.”

The rain had stopped, leaving the city slick and reflective beneath the streetlights.

Anson Hyde sat in the window seat of a café directly across the street from Lenox Hill Hospital. He stirred his espresso with a tiny silver spoon, the clinking sound rhythmic and soothing, and watched Eliza walk out of the hospital entrance. From this distance, she looked small. Defeated. She hailed a taxi and climbed in.

Anson smiled — a cold, tight expression that didn’t reach his eyes.

“She looks pathetic,” a voice said from across the table.

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Suki was wearing oversized sunglasses and a silk scarf wrapped around her head, concealing the blonde hair dyed to match Eliza's honey-brown shade. She was picking apart a croissant.

"She looks desperate," Anson corrected her. "Desperation makes people predictable."

"Boss, how long do I have to keep this up?" Suki whined, touching her face. "I want to go back to being me. This makeup itches, and I hate these boring clothes."

Anson's hand shot across the table and closed around her wrist. His grip was bruising.

“You will be her until I say stop,” he said quietly. “Until the ink on the divorce papers is dry. Do you understand?”

Suki flinched and pulled her hand back. “Okay. Fine. That Weston guy – he’s an idiot. He totally bought it yesterday. He looked like he wanted to kill me.”

“People see what they expect to see,” Anson said. He pulled out his phone and scrolled absently. He nodded to his driver, who stood waiting near the door. “Follow her. See where she goes.”

The Nightingale Diner was a sanctuary of fluorescent light and the smell of frying bacon, the low hum of conversation a welcome relief from the chaos of the hospital.

Eliza felt out of place. Bella had met her at the apartment and helped her into a simple black sheath dress and low heels – professional, but it felt like armor. She clutched her purse and navigated through the tables.

I still think this is a bad idea, Bella had warned before she left. That doctor sounds like a creep.

He’s the only way in, Eliza had replied.

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She spotted him at the back. A corner booth, shielded from the main floor.

Dr. Vance sat alone, nursing a black coffee, looking different without his lab coat — more like a predator in repose. An open medical journal lay beside a plate with a half-eaten slice of pie.

Eliza took a breath and walked to the table.

Vance looked up. His eyes made a slow pass from her head to her feet. He smirked.

“Punctual,” he said, gesturing to the seat across from him. “And you cleaned up. Good.”

Eliza sat on the edge of the vinyl cushion. “Take me to him. You promised.”

Vance took a long, unhurried sip of coffee and slid the sugar dispenser across the table toward her. “Coffee first. Then we talk.”

Eliza looked at the pot the waitress had left. “I don’t want coffee.”

“I don’t trust people who won’t share a pot of coffee with me,” Vance said, leaning back and crossing his arms. “It makes me think they’re hiding something. Drink it, and I’ll tell you the truth about his leg.”

Eliza didn’t hesitate. She poured a cup, black, and took a large swallow. It burned her tongue. She set the cup down firmly.

“Happy?” she rasped.

Vance slow-clapped once. “You have guts. But I changed my mind.”

Eliza’s hands curled into fists. “You’re playing with me.”

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Chapter 283:

“I’m saving you,” Vance said, leaning forward, his voice dropping into something suddenly serious. “If you go up there right now, Dallas will lose his mind. He thinks you’re out celebrating while he’s dying.”

“Then tell me what happened,” Eliza said. “Why does he think I cheated? What did he see?”

Vance studied her face, searching for a micro-expression, a flicker of guilt. He found nothing but exhaustion and raw fear.

“He saw a photo,” Vance said. He pulled out his phone, tapped the screen, and turned it toward her.

It was the photograph from the rainy night – the silhouette in the garden, the woman in the pajamas kissing Anson.

Eliza stared at it. Her mouth fell open. “That... that looks like me.”

“It does,” Vance agreed. “Same hair. Same pajamas. Anson Hyde has an eye for detail.”

“It’s not me!” Eliza looked up, desperate. “I was on FaceTime with Dallas when Anson walked in. I kicked him out!”

“I know,” Vance said calmly.

Eliza froze. “You believe me?”

“I’m a doctor. I believe in data.” Vance took his phone back. “Dallas is emotional. He sees the pajamas, he sees the betrayal. But I saw something else.” He zoomed in on the photograph. “Look at her left wrist. Perfectly clear skin.” He looked up at her. “You, however, have a scar there. A faint, silvery line on the inside of your wrist from when you fell off your bike as a child. Dallas mentioned it once while I was stitching up his hand. He said it was one of the first things he ever noticed about you.”

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Eliza touched her wrist instinctively. The scar was barely visible, but it was there.

“This woman,” Vance tapped the screen, “is a flawless copy. But a copy nonetheless. A small detail — but in my line of work, small details are the difference between life and death.”

Eliza felt a wave of relief so powerful it made her dizzy. “It’s a double. Anson hired a double.”

“Exactly,” Vance said. “But Dallas is in a dark place. He has PTSD, Eliza. The crash triggered it badly. He’s back in a war zone in his head. He doesn’t trust anyone right now. Not even me.”

“How do I fix it?” Eliza asked.

“Tomorrow morning. Nine AM.” Vance stood. “Go to the hospital loading dock. The back entrance — not the lobby.”

“Why the loading dock?”

“Because Weston and Zane are guarding the elevators like Cerberus,” Vance said. “I can distract them for five minutes. That’s all you’ll get. Five minutes to convince a man who believes you destroyed him that he’s wrong.”

“I’ll be there,” Eliza said.

“Good.” Vance tossed a few bills on the table. “Now get out of here. You’re ruining my quiet time.”

The Hyde Estate was quiet, the storm having passed and leaving only a damp chill in the air.

In the master study, Anson poured himself a glass of brandy and stared at the empty fireplace. He was agitated. There had been no news of a divorce filing. Weston hadn’t leaked anything to the press.

The door creaked open.

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Suki slipped inside, wearing a sheer silk robe she had found in Eliza's old closet.

"Boss?" Her voice was husky. "You look tense."

Anson turned. He looked at her, and for a moment, in the dim light, she looked exactly like Eliza – the same curve of the hip, the same tilt of the head.

Suki mistook his stare for desire. She crossed the room toward him, swaying her hips.

"Since you like this face so much," she purred, reaching out to touch his chest, "why don't we—" She moved to sit on the edge of his desk, leaning toward him.

Anson's expression didn't change. He set his glass down.

Then his hand shot out and closed around her throat.

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It happened so fast Suki had no time to scream. He slammed her back against the heavy oak desk.

"Don't," Anson whispered, his face inches from hers. His eyes were dead. "Don't you ever use that face to make that cheap expression."

Suki clawed at his hand, eyes bulging, unable to breathe.

"You are a canvas," Anson said, tightening his grip. "You are paint and plastic. You are not her. You are a fake. Do you understand? Fake." He shoved her away.

Suki stumbled and fell to the floor, gasping, clutching her throat.

“Get out,” Anson said, wiping his hand on his trousers as though he had touched something unclean. “Go back to your room. If I see you out of character again, I’ll break your nose.”

Suki scrambled backward on the floor, her eyes wide with terror. She understood then that Anson Hyde wasn’t merely a jealous ex-lover. He was unhinged.

The next morning, Eliza was up before sunrise, pacing her small apartment living room.

Her phone rang. Victoria’s private nurse.

“Ms. Solomon? Mrs. Hyde has a follow-up appointment at Lenox Hill today — cardiology. She needs a family member to sign the consent forms for a new medication.”

Eliza stopped pacing. Lenox Hill.

It was perfect. A legitimate reason to be in the building. Even if Weston saw her, she had a legal excuse.

“I’ll be there,” Eliza said. “Bring her to the VIP intake on the fourth floor. I’ll meet you.”

She hung up and grabbed her coat. She didn’t bother with makeup. She pulled her hair back into a messy bun. She wanted Dallas to see her raw.

Her phone buzzed. A text from Vance.

Loading dock. 5 minutes.

She took a taxi to the hospital and directed the driver to the service entrance around the back.

Vance was there, leaning against a dumpster, smoking a cigarette. He looked conspicuously out of place in his expensive suit amid the garbage bags.

“You’re early,” he said, dropping the cigarette and crushing it under his heel.

“I have a cover,” Eliza said. “Victoria is here for a checkup. I’m signing her paperwork.”

Vance raised an eyebrow. “Smart. Using the enemy as a shield.” He stepped closer. “Is he awake?”

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“Barely,” Vance said. “He’s on enough morphine to kill a horse. But he’s lucid. Listen carefully.” He moved closer. “Weston and Zane are in the hallway. I’m going to page them to the nurse’s station for a billing issue. That gives you a window. Get into room 2201. Once you’re inside, lock the door.”

“Got it,” Eliza nodded.

“And Eliza.” Vance’s eyes narrowed. “Watch your back. Anson has eyes everywhere. There was a nurse yesterday texting every time you moved.”

“I’m not afraid of Anson,” Eliza said.

“You should be,” Vance said, pulling open the heavy metal service door. “Go. Freight elevator to twenty-two.”

Eliza stepped into the smell of bleach and stale air. The elevator rattled as it climbed.

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Her palms were sweating.

She didn’t know that on the fourth floor, the nurse — Anson’s spy — had already spotted Victoria arriving. She had already sent the message.

Target incoming.

The freight elevator dinged on the twenty-second floor. Eliza stepped out into a quiet corridor used by catering and janitorial staff. She peered around the corner.

The main hallway of the VIP wing was sleek and silent. She could see the door to Room 2201 at the far end. Two chairs sat outside it, empty. Vance had done his job. Weston and Zane were gone.

Eliza took a deep breath and started walking.

“Ms. Solomon?”

A nurse stepped out of a supply closet directly in front of her — petite, dark-haired, with a name tag that read Nurse Halloway.

“I’m here to see my husband,” Eliza said, trying to step around her.

“Actually, I believe you’re here for Mrs. Hyde,” the nurse said, her smile polite and synthetic. “The intake nurse sent me. Victoria is having a spell in the family lounge. She’s asking for you.”

Eliza hesitated. She looked at Dallas’s door, just twenty feet away. Then she thought of Victoria, frail and possibly in distress because of Anson’s madness.

“Where is she?” Eliza asked.

“Right in here.” The nurse pointed to a door labeled Family Consultation Room B.
“Just for a moment. She needs her inhaler.”

Eliza checked her watch. She had three minutes left of Vance’s window.

“Fine,” she said. “Quickly.”

She stepped into the room. It was a small, windowless space with comfortable chairs and a coffee machine.

Victoria was there, sitting in her wheelchair, dozing. She looked perfectly calm.

“Victoria?” Eliza asked.

The door clicked shut behind her.

Then came the distinct, heavy sound of a deadbolt sliding home.

Eliza spun around and seized the handle. Locked.

“Hey!” She pounded on the door. “Open this door!”

Silence.

She pulled out her phone to call Vance.

No Service.

She stared at the bars. Zero.

“He blocked the signal,” Eliza whispered, horror breaking over her. Anson had planted a jammer nearby. This was a trap. She was trapped.

In the hospital parking lot, Weston and Zane were making their way back from the billing department, grumbling about bureaucracy.

“I still don’t understand why they needed both of us to sign one insurance form,” Weston muttered, sipping a lukewarm coffee.

“Look.” Zane stopped and pointed toward the VIP entrance.

A black Maybach had pulled up. Anson Hyde stepped out and walked around to open the passenger door.

A woman got out.

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She was wearing the exact outfit Eliza had worn the day before — the jeans, the beige coat. She had Eliza’s hair. She looked up at Anson and smiled — a dazzling, intimate smile. She reached up and straightened his collar, then leaned in and kissed him on the cheek.

Weston’s coffee cup slipped from his hand. It hit the ground and splattered brown liquid across his shoes.

“Are you kidding me?” he growled. “She’s here? With him? While Dallas is upstairs bleeding?”

“That...” Zane squinted. “That looks just like her.”

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“It is her!” Weston yanked out his phone and snapped three photos in rapid succession. “Look at the way she touches him. She’s not even hiding it!”

Suki, catching them in her peripheral vision, turned slightly. She gave a small wave — mocking, dismissive — before linking her arm through Anson’s and walking with him toward the hospital garden, away from the entrance.

“I’m going to kill her,” Weston said, his face darkening.

“No.” Zane grabbed his arm. “We show Dallas. He needs to see this. He needs to know she’s playing him.”

Upstairs, inside the locked room, Eliza was frantic. She leaned over Victoria and shook her gently.

“Wake up!” she said. “Victoria!”

Victoria mumbled something incoherent and went still again. She was deeply asleep – likely sedated.

Eliza looked around the room. No windows. One vent in the ceiling, far too small to crawl through.

She understood now with perfect, sickening clarity what was happening. She wasn’t just trapped.

She was being framed. Again.

The beep of the heart monitor was the only sound in Room 2201.

Dallas lay still, his leg elevated in a traction sling, his chest wrapped in bandages. His face was pale, deep shadows bruising the skin beneath his eyes.

The door burst open.

Weston marched in, Zane trailing behind him with a reluctant expression.

“You need to see this,” Weston said, thrusting his phone in front of Dallas’s face.

Dallas blinked, his vision blurry from the pain medication. He focused on the screen.

It was a photograph. Taken minutes ago. Eliza, standing beside Anson’s car. Touching his face. Smiling.

“She’s downstairs,” Weston said, his voice shaking with fury. “Right now. We saw her ourselves. She didn’t come up here, Dallas. She went for a stroll in the garden with him.”

Dallas felt a sharp pain in his chest that had nothing to do with his broken ribs. It was cold and hollow.

“Are you sure?” he rasped.

“I saw her with my own eyes,” Weston said. “She waved at us, Dallas. She waved and laughed.”

Dallas closed his eyes. The silhouette from the rainy garden merged with this new photograph into a narrative he could no longer argue against.

“She’s gone,” Dallas whispered.

“She’s playing you,” Weston said. “You need to cut her loose. Now. Before she takes half the company.”

“Call the lawyer,” Dallas said. He turned his head away. “Get the papers ready.”

In the locked room, Eliza was tearing the place apart.

She shoved a heavy armchair aside and found it — a wall jack. A landline jack.

She looked at the side table. A standard hospital phone.

She plugged it in. A dial tone hummed in her ear.

“Thank God,” she breathed.

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She didn't know Vance's number. She didn't know Weston's. She knew only one number by heart that might reach that room — a number she prayed was still connected.

The Red Phone.

It was a secure line Dallas had installed for emergencies. Only five people in the world had the number. She hesitated, her finger hovering over the keypad. Using it felt like a violation, like screaming fire in a crowded theater. But she was on fire. They were burning down.

She dialed. Her fingers trembled.

Pick up. Please pick up.

In Room 2201, the red telephone on the bedside table began to ring. It was a jarring, old-fashioned sound.

Dallas's eyes snapped open. He stared at it. Only a handful of people had that number. Why was it ringing now?

He reached out. His fingers were inches from the receiver.

“Don’t,” Weston said. He stepped forward and seized the handset. A flicker of confusion crossed his face – how had a call from outside gotten through on this line? – but it was immediately consumed by a wave of protective rage. “If it’s her, you don’t need to hear her lies.”

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“Weston—” Dallas warned, too weak to stop him.

Weston answered the phone and hit the speaker button.

“Dallas? Dallas, is that you?” Eliza’s voice filled the room. She sounded hysterical. “I’m trapped! I’m in a room on the twenty-second floor! They locked me in!”

Weston let out a harsh, incredulous laugh. “Wow. That’s a new one. Trapped? We just saw you downstairs with Anson.”

“What? No!” Eliza screamed. “That’s not me! I’m here! I’m in Family Room B! The Nightingale! Dallas, remember the Nightingale! Please – just come open the door!”

“Save it, Eliza,” Weston said coldly. “We have the photos. Dallas has seen them. He’s done. The divorce papers are being drafted as we speak.”

“No! Dallas, listen to me!” Her voice broke. “It’s a trick! Anson has a double! Please!”

Dallas lay still and listened. Her voice sounded so real. So desperate. The Nightingale — a code they had created years ago for when things went truly wrong. But his eyes were still burning from the photograph. The evidence before him versus the voice of a woman who had lied to him.

“Dallas!” she cried.

Weston slammed the receiver down. He reached behind the unit and yanked the cord from the wall.

“It’s over, man,” Weston said, breathing hard. “She’s toxic.”

Dallas stared at the silent red phone. A single tear escaped and tracked slowly through the grime on his cheek.

“Yeah,” he whispered. “It’s over.”

Eliza listened as the line dissolved into dead silence.

He had hung up. He hadn’t even spoken to her.

She lowered the handset. It clattered to the floor.

She curled into a ball beside Victoria’s wheelchair, drawing her knees to her chest.

“He hates me,” she sobbed. “He really hates me.”

The lock clicked.

Eliza’s head snapped up. She wiped her face, bracing herself for Anson, or the nurse, or security.

The door swung open.

Dr. Vance stood there, a master keycard in hand. He looked at Eliza huddled on the floor, then at the unplugged phone.

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“Well,” he said, stepping inside and closing the door behind him. “You look like you’ve been through a war.”

“He’s divorcing me,” Eliza said, her voice hollow. “Weston answered. He said Dallas is done.”

“Weston says a lot of things,” Vance reached down and offered her his hand. “Weston has the emotional intelligence of a teaspoon.”

“He saw photos,” Eliza said, taking his hand and pulling herself up. “They think I was downstairs with Anson.”

“I know,” Vance said. “I saw the performance from the window. Very convincing. If I hadn’t tracked the nurse’s keycard usage and known you were locked in here, I might have believed it myself.”

Eliza stared at him. “You tracked the keycard?”

“I told you,” Vance said. “I like data. Nurse Halloway accessed this room ten minutes ago and no other room since. It was a trap.”

“Take me to him,” Eliza said. The despair was hardening into something sharper. “Now.”

“Weston is guarding the door like a pitbull,” Vance warned. “And Zane is back with a lawyer.”

“I don’t care,” Eliza straightened her spine. “I am going to walk into that room and make him listen.”

Vance studied her for a moment. Then he smiled — a genuine one, for once. “That’s the spirit. That’s the Koch fire.”

He gestured toward a supply closet in the corner. “A direct approach is suicide. But there’s a shift change in ten minutes. The floor staff will be distracted.” He opened the closet and pulled out a set of folded pale blue scrubs and a disposable surgical cap. “These will be too big, but that’s the point. You’re not Eliza Koch anymore — you’re just another exhausted orderly pushing a linen cart. The hallway connects to a service corridor with a staff entrance directly into his bathroom.”

“A disguise,” Eliza said, taking the scrubs.

“The oldest trick in the book,” Vance shrugged. “But it bypasses the pitbull. Get changed. I’ll create a diversion.”

Eliza didn’t hesitate. She stepped behind the privacy screen and changed quickly. The fabric was stiff and smelled of industrial bleach.

“Thank you,” she said, emerging with her hair tucked under the cap.

“Don’t thank me yet,” Vance said. “Fix him. He’s insufferable when he’s heartbroken.”

Eliza slipped out of the room as Vance turned toward the corridor and began loudly demanding to know what had happened to a missing patient file.

Dallas flinched, his body tensing with a pain that had nothing to do with his injuries. He had been staring at the ceiling, replaying the frantic, desperate sound of her voice on the phone – a sound that warred with the image of her smile in the parking lot.

“Get out,” he rasped, his voice raw. “You liar. Get out.”

“I am not a liar!” Eliza’s voice was a furious whisper. She didn’t let go, her grip a desperate anchor. “You are the one who lied! You said you were in Siberia. You said you needed space.” She pointed a trembling finger at his suspended leg. “Is this Siberia, Dallas? Is this a business trip?”

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“It doesn’t matter,” Dallas spat. “Go back to him. I saw you. Downstairs. Just now.”

“You saw a fake!” Eliza leaned in, her face inches from his. “Look at me. Look at what I’m wearing. Look at this ridiculous cap. Does the woman downstairs look like she’s about to take your vitals? Did she have to sneak through a service corridor to get to you?”

Dallas looked. He saw the ill-fitting scrubs. He saw the frantic, terrifying honesty in her eyes.

“Weston said—” he started, his resolve cracking.

“Weston is an idiot,” Eliza cut him off. “Anson hired a double. A woman named Suki. Vance knows. Vance let me in.”

Vance. Dallas blinked. Vance wouldn't let a traitor through. Vance was loyal to the bone.

“Why would Anson do that?” Dallas asked, his voice losing its edge.

“Because he wants to break us,” Eliza said, tears finally spilling over. “And you're letting him. You're helping him.”

“I thought—” Dallas swallowed hard. “I thought you went back to him. The photo in the rain—”

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“I was on the phone with you!” Eliza cried. “He walked in to bring me milk! It was a setup!”

Dallas looked at her. Really looked at her. He saw the exhaustion. The love. The sheer, immovable stubbornness.

“You came in through the staff corridor?” he asked softly.

“I would crawl through fire,” Eliza said. “I love you, Dallas Koch. And if you think a photograph is going to make me leave, then you don’t know me at all.” She leaned down and pressed her forehead against his. “Don’t leave me,” she whispered.

Dallas felt the wall around his heart shatter — not crumble, but explode.

“Never,” he groaned, the word catching in his throat. His good arm trembled as he lifted it, his fingers tangling weakly in the edge of her surgical cap. He couldn’t pull her to him with the force he wanted. Instead, he simply held on — a silent plea.

Eliza understood. She leaned down and closed the distance between them.

The kiss was soft and careful. It tasted of salt and antiseptic and fear, but beneath all of it was a desperate, profound relief. It wasn’t a kiss of passion. It was a homecoming.

For a moment, the pain in his leg vanished. The anger vanished. There was only her.

Heavy footsteps approached the door.

“I’ve got the lawyer on the line!” Weston’s voice boomed from the hallway. “He says we can file for emergency dissolution!”

Dallas broke the kiss. He looked at the door, then at Eliza.

“Hide,” he said.

“No.” Eliza stood up. “I’m done hiding.”

“Eliza, please.” Dallas gripped her hand. “Weston is furious. He might physically remove you before I can stop him. Just go in the bathroom. Give me one minute to handle him.”

Eliza looked at his eyes. He was trying to protect her, even now, broken and barely able to lift his arm.

“Fine,” she said. “One minute.”

She slipped into the bathroom and left the door open just a sliver.

Weston burst into the room.

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Weston marched in, followed by a man in a suit carrying a briefcase – the lawyer. Zane trailed behind, looking miserable.

“Okay, papers are here,” Weston slammed a folder onto the bedside table. “Sign here, here, and here. We cut her off. No alimony. Nothing.”

Dallas looked at the papers. He didn’t pick up the pen.

“What are you waiting for?” Weston asked, impatient. “She’s probably halfway to Paris with Anson by now.”

“What if she isn’t?” Dallas asked quietly.

Weston threw his hands up. “Oh my God. Are we doing this again? Dallas, we saw her! We have photos! She is playing you for a fool!”

“She’s a gold digger,” the lawyer chimed in. “The prenup is clear—”

“Shut up,” Dallas said to the lawyer.

“She is not a gold digger.” Dallas looked at Weston. “And she’s not in Paris.”

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“Then where is she?” Weston challenged. “Hiding under the bed?”

Eliza kicked the bathroom door open.

She stepped out, pulling the surgical cap from her head and letting her hair fall around her shoulders. She fixed Weston with a steady glare.

“I’m right here, Weston,” she said, her voice dangerously calm. “And I’d appreciate it if you stopped trying to divorce me from my husband.”

Weston stumbled back as if he’d seen a ghost. Zane dropped his coffee cup for the second time that day.

“How the hell did you get in here?” Weston sputtered. “I’ve been at the door the entire time!”

“Magic,” Eliza said flatly.

She walked to the bed and took Dallas's hand.

Dallas squeezed her fingers. He looked at Weston. "She's staying."

"Dallas!" Weston looked betrayed. "She's brainwashing you! She was downstairs ten minutes ago!"

"That wasn't me," Eliza said.

"Rubbish!" Weston pulled out his phone again. "I have the picture!"

The door opened. Dr. Vance strolled in, holding a tablet.

"Actually," Vance said, "Weston's evidence is exactly what proves her innocence." He walked over and shoved the tablet at Weston. "Look at the security footage from the parking lot. Frame 347. I zoomed in. Look at the woman's left wrist as she fixes Hyde's collar."

Weston squinted at the image. "So? It's a wrist."

“Exactly. A perfectly clear, unblemished wrist,” Vance said. He swiped the screen, bringing up a high-resolution photograph from the Koch medical file — a close image of Eliza’s wrist. He pointed to a faint, silvery line. “Now look at this. Eliza has a childhood scar right here. Anson’s double doesn’t.”

Vance turned to Eliza. “Show him.”

Eliza raised her left hand and turned her wrist toward the light. The scar was faint, almost invisible, but undeniably there.

“And another thing,” Dallas spoke up, his voice stronger now. “The woman in the parking lot — she walked with a sway. Eliza walks purposefully.”

“Like she’s marching to war,” Vance added helpfully.

Weston lowered the tablet. He looked at the screen, then at Eliza’s wrist, then back at the screen. The certainty on his face began to crumble, replaced by a dawning, horrified understanding.

“So...” Weston started, his face flushing a deep red. “There really is a double?”

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Message from Noa: Hope you have a great weekend dear readers. God loves you and Noa wishes you all the best. (๓O_ =)๓ ♥

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